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condition that the plumage has lost its color values. A few fresh new feathers, however, show among the primary wing coverts and on the alula; and so far as these go they indicate a coloration of adult annual plumage just like that of the first annual.

In an examination of hundreds of specimens of Hermit Thrushes from throughout the United States elsewhere than from the White Mountains, the writer has been unable to find one referable to the race *polionota*. It would seem that this subspecies, like some other migratory birds of the high mountains of the southwest, goes south in the fall to, and back again in the spring from, some far southern winter home without touching the lowlands within hundreds of miles of its restricted summer habitat.

The entire series of fourteen White Mountains Hermit Thrushes was secured through the energetic efforts of Mr. Halsted G. White, field assistant during the summer of 1917.

**LIST AND MEASUREMENTS (IN MILLIMETERS) OF SPECIMENS OF *HYLOCICHLA GUTTATA POLIONOTA* COLLECTED IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS, MONO AND INYO COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA, IN 1917**

No.	Sex	Date	Wing	Tail	Exposed culmen	Tarsus
28838	♂ jv.	July 31	96.6	71.2	12.9	28.8
28840	♂ jv.	July 31	99.5	73.0	12.2	29.1
28842	♂ jv.	Aug. 1	95.3	72.0	11.7	29.8
28843	♂ jv.	Aug. 1	101.6	76.8	.....	30.1
28844	♂ ad. <sup>1</sup>	Aug. 3	97.5	73.0	14.3	31.2
28845	♂ ad. <sup>1</sup>	Aug. 3	99.2	77.3	13.3	28.8
28846	♂ jv.	Aug. 3	98.6	74.6	13.1	30.5
28847	♂ jv.	Aug. 3	101.3	77.3	12.9	30.7
28848	♂ im. <sup>2</sup>	Aug. 18	96.9	73.0	12.4	29.7
28849	♂ im.	Aug. 18	97.5	69.7	12.1	28.8
28850	♂ im.	Aug. 18	98.2	72.8	12.4	30.4
28851	♂ im.	Aug. 18	101.1	74.7	12.1	30.3
28839	♀ jv.	July 31	92.6	67.0	.....	28.9
28841	♀ jv.	Aug. 1	96.5	71.5	11.7	29.7

<sup>1</sup>Badly worn.

<sup>2</sup>Type.

Berkeley, California, December 27, 1917.

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Observations in a Swallow Colony.**—The sea-wall a few miles from Oceanside in San Diego County rises abruptly from a very narrow beach and varies in height from twenty-five to one hundred feet. The materials forming this bluff are in horizontal layers, of clay, cobble-stone, sandstone, and shells, interspersed in a few places with solid masses of very hard rock.

In one of the sandstone strata a colony of Bank Swallows (*Riparia riparia*) have established their "cliff dwellings". Rising sharply from the beach, this layer of compact sand is nowhere over fifteen feet in thickness, while topping it is a stratum of cobble-stone and clay. That this cliff has been the home of many generations of swallows is very certain, as there are hundreds of abandoned tunnels and nests. Each year as the face of the wall is eroded and crumbles away the tiny tunnels are excavated a few inches deeper, and the new nest built at the very end.

No tunnels were found to exceed three feet in depth while the most of those examined were just the length of one's arm. In nearly every case it was an old tunnel that was being used, and as many as four or five old nests could be found buried along the passage. Building material used was a fine dark brown, grassy sea-weed, gathered from

the beach and twisted around by the birds into a very compact nest. This was lined with a few white feathers, mostly those of the Western Gull. In many places these balls of sea-weed, remains of old nests, could be seen at the very entrances to the burrows.

These "cliff dwellings" were not entirely occupied by Bank Swallows, for a number of pairs of the Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon lunifrons lunifrons*) were also at home. In several cases typical bottle necked mud nests were built over entrances to old rooms of the Bank Swallow and contained eggs of *lunifrons*. Apparently an old Bank Swallow nest of sea-weed which was just at the entrance to a tunnel was used, and the entrance "bottled up". In one instance eggs of the Cliff Swallow were found at the end of a two-foot tunnel, lying in a typical sea-weed nest of the Bank Swallow but without any feathers for lining. Not more than four eggs were found in any nest of *lunifrons* while sets of *riparia* ranged from four to seven. At the time of our visit, May 13, 1917, most of these swallow homes held young or eggs far advanced in incubation. One nest of the Bank Swallow with a set of five eggs contained a decided runt, measuring .36x.30 inches and with no yolk.—NELSON K. CARPENTER, *Escondido, California, January 7, 1918.*

**The Rough-legged Hawk in Western Washington.**—One of the most interesting features of the fall migration of hawks, through this part of the state, was the taking on October 20, 1917, of two Rough-legged Hawks (*Archibuteo lagopus sancti-johannis*). The first, a male bird, was collected by Mr. J. Hooper Bowles on the Tacoma tide flats. Seeing something on a cross-bar of a distant telegraph pole that looked very hawk-like, Mr. Bowles carefully approached for a closer view, keeping the pole between himself and the bird. In this way he obtained an excellent "close up", and was, indeed, surprised to find it a Rough-leg.

The bird sat lengthwise of the cross-bar, on the sunny side of the pole, with wings half drooping. This odd attitude was observed by Mr. Bowles for a minute or more before collecting; when the hawk was brought to hand, he found the wings and tail soaking wet, which probably accounted for the strange position on the bar. A freshly eaten field mouse, found in its stomach may have been caught swimming across one of the many channels of the flats, and the hawk had probably been obliged to take a partial dip to secure its prey.

The other bird, also a male, was, curiously enough, taken by the present writer on the same day and only about a mile distant from where Mr. Bowles got his. The latter was taken in the morning, however, and mine in the afternoon. In coloration, the two are almost alike, and in very good plumage, though the one I collected was afflicted by a bad case of what we might call "scaly leg", so common among chickens. Several big growths were found on each leg, one or two of which had been picked by the bird and were sore-looking and bloody.

My specimen was presented to Mr. D. E. Brown, of Seattle, who reported finding the body covered with sores when he skinned it. The stomach of this one also contained a field mouse.

Though the Rough-leg is somewhat of a wanderer, local bird men have few, if any, records of it for this vicinity, although east of the Cascades it is frequently met with.—E. A. KITCHIN, *Tacoma, Washington, February 1, 1918.*

**Wood Duck at San Diego.**—On November 16, 1917, a female Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) in fine condition and evidently just shot by some hunter, was picked up near a water hole by Mr. Jas. McAuliffe and brought to me while still warm. The bird is now in the collection of the San Diego Natural History Society. This is the first time I have seen this species here, and it is worth recording the occurrence of this rare visitor to this place.—HENRY GREY, *San Diego, California, January 8, 1918.*

**Whip-poor-will in New Mexico in March.**—The characteristic call-notes of the Whip-poor-will, uttered repeatedly by two birds, presumably the Stephens Whip-poor-will (*Setochalcis vocifera arizonae*), were heard for some minutes preceding daylight on March 2, 1917, at Rodeo, New Mexico. This place is near the Arizona line, in the extreme southwestern part of Grant County. The altitude being above 4000 feet, the winter months are chilly, and on the date mentioned the freezing point was registered.

Notwithstanding this early appearance within our border, the usual arrival of the

species upon the breeding grounds, at least in that portion included in the Chiricahua Mountains, Arizona, is very much later. In this range of mountains, about fifteen miles distant from Rodeo, the Stephens Whip-poor-will is a fairly common summer visitant to the oak region, but I did not record it there during 1917 until May 21, this at Paradise Post Office.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Rio Hondo, Texas, December 29, 1917.*

**Some Pugnacious Coots.**—Our boat house rests in a cut opening out of Butte Slough, in Colusa County, California. Between the end of the boat house and the current of the slough, there are sixty or eighty feet of still water; three Mud Hens (*Fulica americana*) have taken possession of this spot. They have grown quite tame; not only do they come up to the boat house for their food, but when hungry swim up and are clamorously insistent with their "put-put-put".

The men have frequently told me that they were murderous fighters against their own kind, and one day I was a witness of such a fight. A strange Mud Hen swam from the creek into the quiet water. The first of the three to see him attacked the stranger at once, "putting" harshly, and the intruder gave battle without the slightest attempt to retreat. They pecked at each other savagely. The other two boat house Mud Hens swam up to the fray, one of them joining in, the other, the smallest of the three and probably the female, simply looking on. In time they pecked the strange Mud Hen into a state of exhaustion. It was manifestly too weak to fly, but tried to make its escape by swimming. They followed it up, and one actually stood on its body while the other held its head under the water until it was dead. When satisfied of this, they left it.

The men tell me that nearly every day they murder one of their kind in this manner, and yet oddly enough they pay not the slightest attention to crippled ducks which drift down the current and often take refuge in the same cut. It would, of course, be perfectly easy for the Mud Hen which is attacked to escape by flight, but in no instance, my men say, has one ever attempted to do so.

The third and smaller Mud Hen never takes part in the fight, but is always an interested spectator. Once a battle began when only one of the boat house Mud Hens was present, but its call soon brought the other two, which had drifted down the creek, and they came back to the rescue flying. It seemed to me to be a curious phase of pugnacity, considering the gregarious habits of the bird.—F. W. HENSHAW, *San Francisco, January 26, 1918.*

**The Name of the American Barn Swallow.**—In a recent paper entitled "The Birds of the Anamba Islands" (Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., no. 98, June 30, 1917, pp. v+75, 2 pls.), Dr. H. C. Oberholser discusses the relationships of the American Barn Swallow with the closely similar forms of the Old World. He concludes that intergradation is complete through several intervening races between *Hirundo rustica*, the common Swallow of Europe, and our own Barn Swallow, and hence adopts the trinomial form of designation for the latter—*Hirundo rustica erythrogasteris*. Also the race *palmeri* once proposed by me from Alaska is not deemed tenable. With regard to both contentions the supporting facts presented seem to me now conclusive.

In the spelling of the subspecific name of the American form, however, I believe Oberholser to be wrong, and *erythrogaster* should be the proper spelling, not *erythrogasteris*. The term *erythrogaster* cannot be considered an adjective. It is a Greek noun, retaining its own gender and case when Latinized. *Hirundo* is feminine, but that should not affect the ending of the third term of the trinomial the case of which is, in this instance, nominative. If there were any doubt about this, final appeal to the original describer ought to settle it. The bird was described as *Hirundo erythrogaster*, which shows well enough the writer's intention. The name of our Barn Swallow ought to stand as *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster*. I am indebted to Professor W. A. Merrill, of the Latin department of the University of California, for pertinent information in connection with my present enquiry.

There seems to be a tendency even yet towards unnecessarily tampering with the spelling of names as originally proposed by describers. In this regard I wish also to protest against Oberholser's misquotation of my name *Guiraca caerulea salicarius*, emending it to *G. c. salicaria* (Auk, vol. 34, April, 1917, p. 204). *Salicarius* was employed as a noun, obviously.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, January 9, 1918.*

**Two More Records for the Widgeon in Washington, and Other Notes.**—On January 13, 1918, two fully adult males of the European Widgeon (*Mareca penelope*) were shot on the Nisqually Flats, Thurston County, Washington, and brought in to Edwards Bros., of Tacoma, for mounting. They are in magnificent plumage and Mr. Edwards, who is a true ornithologist, expressed sincere regret that he could not make them into skins for scientific use.

Further notes of interest have reached me from Mr. Walter F. Burton, Victoria, B. C., regarding the Horned Owl invasion of this season. As was the case in Washington, they were not so plentiful as last season. Mr. Burton writes in part: "Dec. 30, 1917. We have paid out 50c bounty on eighty-five owls so far (Dusky Horned). They are not as plentiful as last winter". Truly they must have become scarce in their natural habitat. In this connection Mr. Ernest S. Norman, Kalevala, Manitoba, writes me that Horned Owls of any kind have suddenly disappeared from his locality, where formerly they were fairly common. It would be interesting if more notes could be had from northern collectors on this subject.

The Snowy Owls (*Nyctea nyccea*), in spite of almost summer conditions here, have been even more numerous in some parts of Washington than they were last season. A possible cause for these invasions of the large owls has been suggested to me by Mr. D. E. Brown, of Seattle, Washington. He says that a friend, recently down from Alaska, informed him that the rabbits up there were practically exterminated about a year ago by what he thought must have been some kind of disease, which would just about coincide with the first great owl migration of 1916-1917. In addition to this it is well known from several sources that ptarmigan have been scarce in Alaska for the past year. There is little doubt that rabbits and ptarmigan, especially the rabbits, form two important items in the diet of the larger owls during the winter months, so that the search for food may have started hundreds of them upon what proved to be very long journeys.

One cannot help feeling a great deal of sympathy for the Snowy Owls, as their stomachs have seldom contained any food this winter, in spite of the fact that they are nearly always surrounded by hundreds of ducks of many species. Mammals are scarce in this locality and it seems evident that these owls only eat birds when forced to do so by extreme hunger. Quite the contrary is the case with the Horned Owls, which are killers of birds and mammals alike, although they seldom pay much attention to the smaller species of either.—J. H. BOWLES, *Tacoma, Washington, January 28, 1918.*

**Do Purple Martins Inhabit Bird Boxes in the West?**—This year the writer erected a martin box at Albuquerque, New Mexico. I have since kept my eyes open for instances of successful martin boxes in the southwest, but have found none. Last summer I found Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) nesting abundantly in pine snags killed by impounded waters at Lake Mary and Coleman Lake, in Coconino County, Arizona. It occurs to me that this bird may not yet have become domesticated in the west. Can any reader of THE CONDOR enlighten me on this question?—ALDO LEOPOLD, *Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 21, 1918.*

#### **Two Midwinter Records for San Francisco County, California.—**

Holboell Grebe (*Colymbus holboelli*). On December 23, 1917, while taking a Christmas bird census for *Bird-Lore* with Mr. C. R. Thomas of Berkeley, California, a Holboell Grebe was seen at Stow Lake, Golden Gate Park, a species that is very uncommon in this region. Kobbe writes in *The Auk* (1901) that an individual was taken at Oakland in 1882, and that several were seen off the Presidio shore in 1900. Mr. Loomis also found this Grebe uncommon at Monterey Bay. The Grebe was last seen by the present writer at Stow Lake, February 3, 1918.

Whistling Swan (*Olor columbianus*). Two swans, presumably of this species, were seen feeding at Lake Merced December 23, 1917. This is the first time that I have seen the species in this region and I believe that this is the first record for San Francisco County.—HAROLD E. HANSEN, *San Francisco, February 8, 1918.*